

VZCZCXRO3694

PP RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHFL RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV
RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #4902/01 2361139
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241139Z AUG 06 ZDK CTG NUM SVCS
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8165
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004902

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2021

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DIYARBAKIR MAYOR OSMAN BAYDEMIR: AIMING TO BE A VOICE OF MODERATION

ANKARA 00004902 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Adana Principal Officer Eric Green for reasons
1.4(b),(d)
)

¶1. (U) This is an AmCon Adana message.

2.(C) Summary: Osman Baydemir, the 35-year old mayor of Diyarbakir, aspires to a national leadership role among the Kurds in Turkey. Baydemir, s moderate approach * he renounces violence and calls for immediate dialogue between the Turkish government and Kurdish political leaders * avoids much of the pro-PKK agenda of his Democratic Society Party (DTP) colleagues. He said, however, that he cannot publicly condemn the PKK given his constituents, sympathies. A Baydemir aide said separately that the mayor is jockeying for position within the Kurdish establishment and wants his contacts with the U.S. to enhance his status and promote his goal of becoming the Kurds, interlocutor with the GOT. In order to establish his credentials as part of the solution and gain the trust of those in national government who view him with immense suspicion, he needs to demonstrate that he is capable of changing the culture of violence that has dominated the politics of Turkey, s Kurds for the past 15 years. End Summary.

Pushing for Dialogue

¶3. (C) In a 17 August office call, Diyarbakir mayor Osman Baydemir told Adana Consulate Principal Officer and Poloff that Turkey needs a roadmap to solve the Kurdish issue. The first step needs to come soon in the form of dialogue, he said, but no one in the Turkish state seems prepared to do so. Dialogue would stop the violence and could be a stepping stone to bringing about a lasting solution. Baydemir added that the Kurdish issue & could be a problem in Turkey for 20 to 30 years, but the important thing is to remove weapons from the equation.8

¶4. (C) In addition, Baydemir, who among all other Kurdish politicians is arguably most accountable to his constituents as the mayor of the cultural capital of Turkish Kurds, stressed the need to have national-level representation for Kurds in the Southeast. Baydemir complained about the 10-percent national election threshold, which effectively bars members of his Democratic Society Party (DTP) from being elected to Parliament. When poloff noted that there are currently Kurdish deputies serving in Parliament, Baydemir said that Kurds need "Kurdish deputies, not Kurdish-origin deputies8) drawing the distinction between ethnic Kurds currently in Parliament, whom he believes are not representing the Kurdish cause, and DTP members whose agenda

centers on advancing Kurdish rights.

¶15. (C) A more long-term solution to the issue might be a looser administrative structure in Turkey, Baydemir argued. Turkey's centralized system is inefficient and unable to cope with Turkey's pressing social and economic problems. Turkey's geography, he continued, is suitable for establishing up to seven administrative regions that could be more responsive to local needs. The offices of governors and mayors, especially in big cities, should merge, which would place the police under the responsibility of an elected mayor, as is the practice in the U.S. While Baydemir said that he favors federalism for Turkey as a long-term solution, he believes that advocating such an approach now is not worth the suspicions it would engender within the GOT.

¶16. (C) While sounding a moderate note, Baydemir was nevertheless pessimistic that progress would happen quickly. Right now, he said, the security forces are focused on stopping violence with more violence instead of addressing the causes of violence. He added that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government is unlikely to take any positive steps prior to the next national election, which must be held by fall 2007. Ominously, Baydemir warned that Turkish Hizbulah is on the rise again in the Southeast, saying that it should not be surprising that Hizbulah is gaining strength at a time when the security forces seem to be embracing the harsher counter-insurgency tactics of the 1990s. Baydemir implied that elements of the Turkish state have begun supporting Hizbulah again, as they did in the mid-1990s. Other contacts in the Southeast, however, have noted that while Hizbulah is increasing its activities, it is doing so without the state's support and protection.

Baydemir advisor: Use the Mayor

¶17. (C) In a separate meeting on 18 August, Seyhmus Diken * a
ANKARA 00004902 002.2 OF 002

Kurdish intellectual, author, and former vice chairman of Diyarbakir's chamber of commerce who currently serves as an advisor to Baydemir * urged the U.S. to see Baydemir as a spokesman for Turkey's Kurds and a potential interlocutor for the GOT. Diken told us that Turkish government officials in Ankara tend to see Baydemir merely as a mayor of a moderately-sized city, not as a national Kurdish political figure. Baydemir, Diken claimed, is flexible and capable of moderating the DTP-PKK's reliance on the use of force. Although Baydemir is reluctant to condemn the organization publicly * it could mean political suicide * Diken believes he is a force for change. For example, Diken noted that Baydemir did not sign a petition circulating in Diyarbakir strongly supporting Ocalan as the Kurds' political leader.

¶18. (C) Diken conceded that although the youthful Baydemir is an increasingly important voice for Kurds in the Southeast and has national leadership potential, his influence within DTP is limited by the party's &Stalinistic8 leadership structure as well as the continuing role of the PKK.

Comment

¶19. (C) Baydemir presents himself as a smart, popular administrator who, as the mayor of the largest city in Turkey's Kurdish region, is a natural to serve as his community's spokesman on the national stage. To pull this off, he must walk a fine line: he believes he cannot afford to publicly break with the PKK. This is a familiar message that we hear regularly from DTP interlocutors. In order to establish his credentials as part of the solution and gain the trust of those in government who view him with suspicion, he needs to demonstrate that he is capable of changing the

culture of violence that has dominated the politics of Turkey's Kurds for the past 15 years.

Baydemir bio note

¶110. (U) Born in Dokuzceltik on outskirts of Diyarbakir on June 6, 1971. Graduated from Diyarbakir's Dicle University Law Faculty in 1994. Joined the Human Rights Association (HRA) following a one-year apprenticeship as an attorney. Became national vice chairman of HRA in 1997 and simultaneously began serving as chairman of the Diyarbakir HRA branch. From May to December 2003, took English lessons in the U.S., although prefers to speak Turkish in meetings. Married to Reyhan Yalcin, an attorney who is currently the national vice chairman of the HRA.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON